

## NAMB may start international ministries

**NASHVILLE (BP)** — Chaplain-led ministry near overseas military bases someday may become part of the North American Mission Board (NAMB) church planting outreach, if a proposed ministry amendment is approved during the June 16-17 annual meeting of the Southern

Baptist Convention (SBC) in Columbus, Oh.

The SBC Executive Committee (EC) approved a recommendation to be presented to messengers in Columbus to enable NAMB to "provide specialized, defined and agreed upon assistance to the International Mission Board in assist-

ing churches to plant churches for specific groups outside the United States and Canada."

EC leaders said the possibility of military chaplains facing religious liberty constraints is a key factor for the recommendation, though the wording allows for other contingencies that may prompt NAMB/

International Mission Board (IMB) overseas cooperation in the future.

Our culture "is becoming increasingly hostile to Christianity and to the Christian message," EC chairman Mike Routt said in response to several questions raised before EC members voted without opposition to forward the recommendation to messengers in June.

"There might come a day to where our chaplains can't really preach the Gospel," said Routt, pastor of Circle Drive Church in Colorado Springs,

see NAMB on p. 9



**STANDING FOR RIGHT** — Dismissed Atlanta fire chief Kelvin Cochran (at podium) stands among supporters as he addresses a press conference immediately after filing a federal civil rights lawsuit against the city of Atlanta, alleging his constitutionally-guaranteed freedom of religion was violated when he was fired by Mayor Kassim Reed. (BP photo courtesy of The Christian Index)

## Fired Atlanta fire chief files federal lawsuit against city

**ATLANTA (BP)** — Kelvin Cochran, Atlanta's fire chief before being dismissed in January by Mayor Kassim Reed for expressing his opinion against homosexuality, has filed a federal civil rights lawsuit against the city alleging his dismissal violated his right to freedom of religion.

Cochran, a leader at Georgia Baptist Convention-affiliated Elizabeth Church in Atlanta, was suspended in late November and ordered to undergo sensitivity training after the book he self-published, *Who Told You That You Were Naked?*, was deemed offensive for including sections from the Bible that described marriage as being between one man and one woman.

"Americans are guaranteed the freedom to live without fear [of] being fired because of their beliefs and their thoughts," said David Cortman, senior counsel for Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) in Scottsdale, Az., explaining the lawsuit ADF filed on behalf of Cochran.

"...In America, a religious test cannot be used to fire a public servant," Cortman said Feb. 18 at a press conference at the state capitol, moments after the lawsuit was filed.

The federal civil rights lawsuit against the city of Atlanta and Reed is necessary "in order to protect not only [Cochran's] Constitutional rights, but everyone else's Constitutional

rights of free speech and the free exercise of religion," Cortman said.

Cortman quoted Atlanta City Councilman Alex Wan, a leader of the move to remove Cochran, who told the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, "when you're a city employee and [your] thoughts, beliefs, and opinions are different from the city's, you have to check them at the door."

Cortman added, "That should be a startling statement to all of us."

Cochran served as the head of the U.S. Fire Administration under U.S. President Barack Obama. In 2012, Fire Chief magazine named him Fire Chief of the Year.

## Alabama Baptist assoc. recommends church's dismissal

**HUNTSVILLE, Ala. (BP)** — The officers of an Alabama Baptist association have recommended that the association's executive board withdraw fellowship from a church whose leaders have given their pastor freedom to perform same sex weddings.

Madison Association in Huntsville said in a written statement released to Baptist Press (BP) that Weatherly Heights Church, also in Huntsville, is in violation of a section in the association's bylaws that defines marriage as "a union between one man and one woman."

Associational officers met with representatives of the congregation Feb. 17, prompted by news media reports that Weatherly Heights' volunteer, unpaid minister to the community, Ellin Jimmerson, intended to perform a same-sex wedding.

The meeting led to a recommendation by the officers that the association's executive board withdraw fellowship from Weatherly Heights at the board's March 5 meeting.

Weatherly Heights — which describes itself on its website as "an inclusive, discovering fellowship" — confirmed to BP Feb. 10 that Jimmerson had performed at least one same sex wedding.

Weatherly Heights Pastor David Freeman called the meeting with Madison Association officers "cordial" and said in written comments to BP, "MBA representatives determined that my beliefs about homosexuality and

same sex marriage fall outside the positions adopted in the association's bylaws."

Freeman added, "If our church is dismissed, I will be saddened. My Baptist roots run deep. My tent is big enough to include people who disagree with me on these issues. I hope their tent will be big enough to include me. If we are dismissed by the MBA, we have options for mission and ministry engagement with other Baptist bodies."

Freeman argued in a 2013 sermon that "adult, loving, monogamous, same-sex relationships are not

see DISMISSAL on p. 9

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## From the editor

WILLIAM PERKINS

### Chicken and resolve

As Mississippians who believe in the traditional definition of marriage await the state's fate in the Fifth Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals in New Orleans — and the U.S. Supreme Court agrees to hear an appeal at their level that could ultimately legalize same sex marriage nationwide — it's understandable that many people would approach the coming days with a touch of anxiety.

If so, perhaps it's a good idea to look back to 2012 and remember what we can accomplish when we pull together.

Remember when Dan Cathy, head of Chick-fil-A restaurants, expressed his support for the traditional definition of marriage in an interview with a newspaper? Remember how the homosexual lobby tried to put the company out of business? Remember the response to their vicious smear campaign?

According to Fox News, in 2009 Chick-fil-A sold more than 261 million sandwiches (eight per second) through more than 1,600 stores in 39 states, using a total of 162 million pounds of chicken. They have had 46 consecutive years of sales growth (every year since its inception), and increased sales in 2011 to \$1.4 billion — a 13% rise over the previous year.

Then came the Cathy interview. All of a sudden Chick-fil-A was toxic in the national news media, which is nothing more than a pliant foot servant of the homosexual rights movement. "Chick-fil-A is anti-gay!" screamed the headlines on liberal newspapers around the country. Boycotts of the company's restaurants were quickly organized to protest the "hate" message Cathy was promoting with his company's financial support of "extremist" groups like Focus on the Family and Fellowship of Christian Athletes.

Boston Mayor Thomas Menino, a Democrat, announced that his city was such a tolerant place that he would not tolerate a Chick-fil-A restaurant. Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel, also a Democrat, likewise criticized the company for their draconian views on homosexuality and then warmly greeted Muslim strongman Louis Farrakhan, who proposes executions for homosexuals. The San Francisco mayor... well, enough said.

Mind you, the word "gay" was not uttered by Cathy in the interview. He spoke about traditional marriage. His words were twisted by agenda-driven news media and special interest groups with vested interests to the point that most people might have been tempted to equate what Cathy said with Farrakhan's rantings.

However, it seems people like you and me finally had enough of that kind of talk aimed at believers who wish to stand on their convictions. When Mike Huckabee called for a Chick-fil-A Appreciation Day on his Fox News Channel show, ordinary folks with no ax to grind jumped at the chance to do something to be heard.

Thus the largest sales day in the history of Chick-fil-A was accomplished. People across the country stood in line for hours for the opportunity to plod down their hard earned money for something in which they believed — and it wasn't chicken.

People are tired of being told they are homophobic (a made-up word) and intolerant (a very real and hurtful word) when they're not. People are sick of being compared to racists and fascists when they're not. People are fed up with being looked down upon for holding to the traditional understanding of marriage.

Maybe people can't take on a federal judge or fight a presidential executive order, but they bought chicken that day. Maybe there's nothing they can do when the news media attack and brutalize them, but they bought chicken that day. Maybe their work hours and family demands prevent them from participating in a heterosexual "kiss-in," but they bought chicken that day. Maybe people feel otherwise helpless to do anything, but they bought chicken that day.

Homosexual rights groups, and especially the politicians who support them, should take note. On August 1, 2012, there was an overwhelming turnout of people determined to make a statement about traditional values and demanding their right to support those values.

That can happen on any given election day, too.

## The right questions

Several very confused people have contacted me with questions about efforts to defend homosexuality within a biblical context. One person asked if he had been unnecessarily resisting something that really isn't forbidden.

The common thread of such questions leads back to humanity's original temptation by Satan: "Has God said?" Then Satan's subtle follow-up statements: "God is just holding out on you. He doesn't want you to know something that will make you like Him. God won't do anything. You won't suffer any consequences."

Those tactics are still prominent in the enemy's arsenal, and why wouldn't they be? They remain incredibly effective. We humans still haven't realized that Satan is far more crafty than any of us. We overlook the fact that he is described as a deceiver or liar more than a tempter.

Part of the problem is that we are allowing ourselves to ask and answer the wrong questions. If we ask the wrong question, the answer won't really matter.

We get lost in arguing nature, nurture, born that way, I've tried to change and can't, I can't deny my feelings, this is who I am. The correct question is "Has God said?" If we determine that, all the other questions are superfluous.

On the issue of homosexuality, some have decided that we've misunderstood the biblical texts. Over the last 50 years, several books have been written to defend that position. As I've examined some of those arguments, I'm reminded of something a seminary professor told us young theologians who were bursting with great wisdom and were so anxious to impart to a heretofore unknowing church.

He said, "If you think you've discovered some great truth that no one else in 2,000 years of church history has discovered, you're probably wrong."

Only in the last five or six decades have we seen concerted arguments that we have misunderstood every text in the Bible on homosexuality. Perhaps that view would have more merit if one overlooked the fact that not one verse in the entire Bible speaks favorably of homosexual activity or relationships.

You also must overlook the fact that Jesus made clear God's original intent (Genesis 2; Matthew 19:4-6).



Guest opinion  
with Bob Stith

I've spent more time studying the issue of homosexuality over the last 20 years than any other single issue or doctrine, with the possible exception of our identity in Christ. I can find nothing in latter-day scholarship that supersedes the collected wisdom of over 3,000 years of biblical studies.

Paul tells us in Ephesians 4:14-15, "Then we will no longer be little children, tossed by the waves and blown around by every wind of teaching, by human cunning with cleverness in the techniques of deceit. But speaking the truth in love, let us grow in every way into Him who is the head — Christ."

More pointedly in Galatians 6:7-8, "Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. Whoever sows to please his flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life."

Be sure you are asking and answering the right questions. Many are falling prey to the temptation to interpret Scripture in light of their experience instead of interpreting their experience in light of Scripture.

Let us be diligent in our study of the Word and then let us also be careful to speak the truth in love.

For those who persist in saying what God does not, I fear for them. Their statements may negatively impact many others, and one day they will stand before the judgment seat of Christ to give an answer.

Stith formerly served as the Southern Baptist Convention's national strategist for gender issues. He is founder of Family and Gender Issues Ministries in Southlake, Texas, and may be contacted at [bstith777@juno.com](mailto:bstith777@juno.com). His commentary appears courtesy of Baptist Press. Edited for style and length.

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# Jeffress: ISIS, radical Islam determined to 'destroy us'

**NEW YORK (BP and local reports)** — The United States must do "whatever is necessary — including boots on the ground — to eradicate this cancer of ISIS and radical Islam before it destroys us," Southern Baptist pastor Robert Jeffress said Feb. 17 on the Fox News Network broadcast, *The O'Reilly Factor*.

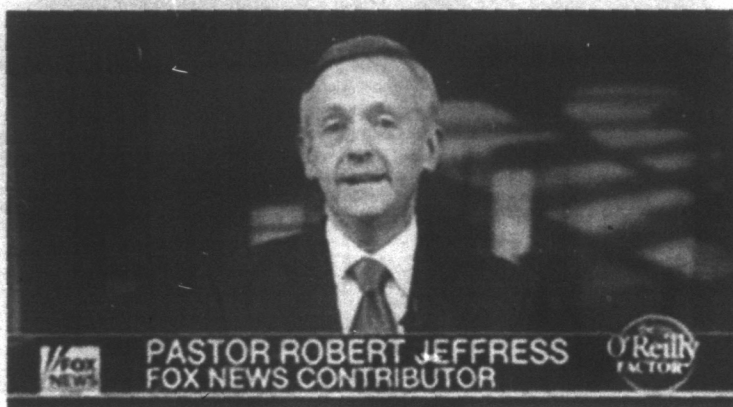
The outspoken Jeffress, pastor of First Church in Dallas, has emerged in recent years as a sought-after conservative commentator on news and analysis shows. He contended on *The O'Reilly Factor* that U.S. President Barack Obama is "continually lecturing us that we're not in a religious war against Islam."

"While that's true, it's time for this president to get off his high horse and acknowledge that radical Islam is in a religious war against us," Jeffress said.

Until Americans understand they're targets in a war, they won't grasp the dangers ahead, he warned. "These Islamists will not rest until they've exterminated every Jew and every Christian from the face of the earth, and if you think that is hyperbole, just listen to what they said on that Libyan beach after they butchered those 21 Christians."

The Islamic terror group ISIS, in a Feb. 16 video titled, *A Message Signed with Blood to the Nation of the Cross*, beheaded a group of Egyptian Coptic Christians working in Libya, and said they intend to conquer Rome next.

"While Rome may be their next stop, I guarantee you it won't be their final



stop," Jeffress said. "They're coming after every one of us as well if we don't stop them now."

O'Reilly said Obama seems to be downplaying the threat of ISIS to the United States. He asked Jeffress to surmise why.

"I think part of it is the influence of Islam on his own life," Jeffress said. "He sees radical Islam as a tiny minority, and while that's true, a powerful minority is much more potent than a passive majority."

Rather than acknowledging that ISIS is a branch of Islam, Obama seems to hope that if he ignores or contains the threat it will go away,

Jeffress said. "This is not going away," he pointed out.

Jeffress said he believes in the prophecies of the Bible, "that things are going to get worse before the Lord returns, but that is no excuse for fatalism, and I believe that Christians ought to be on the forefront of fighting this evil, and this is unmitigated evil — burning people alive."

Another video released earlier by ISIS shows the burning alive of a caged Jordanian pilot who was captured after his fighter jet went down over ISIS territory. There are also reports that ISIS has burned alive dozens of Christians.

Jeffress called on Christians every-

where to "demand that this president do whatever is necessary — including boots on the ground — to eradicate this cancer of ISIS and radical Islam before it destroys us."

O'Reilly noted that Obama, in a statement condemning the beheadings, referred to the victims only as Egyptian citizens rather than acknowledging that Muslims brutalized Christians. "These weren't activists or soldiers or anything like that," O'Reilly said of the Christians. "They were poor people who went from Egypt to Libya to try to make a buck for their family, and [ISIS] rounded them up and they cut their heads off."

Also appearing on the show was Gerald Murray of Holy Family Catholic Church in New York, who said Pope Francis "will continue to say that the West has a duty to protect the innocent and fight this."

O'Reilly lamented a lack of moral leadership regarding ISIS. "A cohesive moral leadership does not exist on this earth," he said. Reiterating Jeffress' call for Christians to demand action, O'Reilly said, "I think all Christians, Jews, and secularists who love their country and want to protect humanity should email and call the White House and say, 'Enough.'"

O'Reilly also called on "every pastor, every priest, every rabbi and every imam" in the country to address the matter with their congregations by saying, "We people of good faith have to tell our leader to get in gear."

## Baptist leaders pray for terrorists' defeat, salvation

**NASHVILLE (BP)** — Prayers for both the defeat of and salvation for Islamic State terrorists are not contradictory, Southern Baptists' lead ethicist says.

Christians should "pray for the Gospel to go forward, and that there might be a new Saul of Tarsus turned away from murdering to Gospel witness," wrote Russell Moore, president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission in Nashville, in a Feb. 18 blog post. "At the same time, we ought to pray, with the martyrs in heaven, for justice against those who do such wickedness."

Moore's comments came three days after the release of a video showing the apparent beheadings of 21 Egyptian Coptic Christians in Libya by members of the Islamic State.

Text that accompanied the video is addressed to "The people of the cross, followers of the hostile Egyptian church," according to news reports.

Prayers for both the defeat of such enemies and their conversion to Christ "are not contradictory prayers because salvation doesn't mean turning an eye away from justice," he said. "We can pray for Gospel rootedness in the Middle East, and we can pray to light up their world like the Fourth of July, at the same time."

Frank S. Page, president of the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee in Nashville, said in comments for Baptist Press, "It has been said that those who were executed by [the Islamic State] were citizens of Egypt. While I certainly did not

know any of them individually and do not know their hearts, they were self-proclaimed citizens of the Kingdom and followers of Christ."

"It is my prayer that Christ stood to welcome them into the Kingdom as He did for the martyr Stephen," Page said, referencing the early Christian whose stoning death is recorded in Acts 7.

Ronnie Floyd, president of the Southern Baptist Convention and senior pastor of Cross Church in northwest Arkansas, offered a two-fold approach to Islamic terrorism.

"Unquestionably and undeniably, the No. 1 need and the No. 1 hope in this world is the Gospel of Jesus Christ," Floyd said Feb. 16 in addressing the semi-annual SBC Executive Committee meeting, "and our No. 1 goal that should never ever be compromised is to penetrate and push back the lostness in this world."

"Simultaneously, we must speak for those who are unable to speak up for themselves tonight."

Southern Baptists "need to stand for the children, the women and the men who are being brutalized and abused and murdered globally, all in the name of religion," and they need to challenge America's leaders also to stand for the victims, Floyd said. "We need to champion, as Southern Baptists, religious liberty globally."

He urged Executive Committee members to call on their churches "to join in this valiant effort of deep prayer for men and women and chil-

**"[In this case, Christians] not only have the common grace standing of caring about stopping murder and injustice, rooted in the image of God and the law written on the heart, we also have the personal implication here. It's our household being wiped out in the Middle East, the very place where our church started. For us, this isn't a matter of 'they,' it's a matter of 'us.'"**

**Russell Moore**

**president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission**

dren who are being abused and murdered in all kinds of ways."

In his blog post, Moore said Christians feel prayer for the defeat of the Islamic State and for the salvation of its members is contradictory primarily because "we sometimes forget that we are called to be a people of both justice and justification, and that these two are not contradictory."

The Islamic State "is raping, enslaving, beheading, crucifying our brothers and sisters in Christ, as well as other innocent people," he wrote. "To not pray for swift action against them is to not care about what Jesus said we should seek, what we should hunger and thirst for, for justice. A world in which murderous gangs commit genocide without penalty is not a 'merciful' world but an unjust horror show."

The Gospel of Jesus "does not say, 'Don't worry about it; it's okay,'"

Moore said. "The Gospel points us to the cross where sin is absorbed in a substitute. God's righteous condemnation of sin is there. He does not, and cannot, enable wickedness. And God's mercy is there in that He is the One who sends his Son as the propitiation for sin."

"The Gospel doesn't leave sin unpunished. Every sin is punished, either at the Place of the Skull, in Christ, or in the judgment of hell, on one's own."

In this case, Christians "not only have the common grace standing of caring about stopping murder and injustice, rooted in the image of God and the law written on the heart," he wrote. "We also have the personal implication here. It's our household being wiped out in the Middle East, the very place where our church started. For us, this isn't a matter of 'they,' it's a matter of 'us.'"

**"The Best and Worst States to Live in When You Get Old"** — that was the news headline that got my attention one day as I turned my computer on. It was a story that was basically built around the aging population of America and the place was best to live in if you were old and the worst to live in. Now the way they determined the best place to live in was to look at all of the support systems for health and wellbeing, hospitals and specialized institutions to help people with their aging process and it also looked at the average income of people 65 and above living in those areas. Now what is interesting is that in 2000 according to this article, those 65 and above numbered about 38 million in America and now those 65 and above in America are somewhere over 50 million. "The graying of America" as it is generally referred is certainly taking place and I, of course, will not participate in the graying of our great country. But here is what the article said the best place and the worst place to live if you were growing old. Utah... Utah is supposed to be the best place. The worst place? Well, I absolutely don't understand it, but they said it was Mississippi.

I agree with the person who said to me, "It would probably be better to live 65 years in Mississippi than to live 150 in Utah." I'm not picking on Utah, I'm just saying that it may be that people in their 50s and 60s just think it's been a 150 years. I'm not mad at the people who made the list; I'm just amazed at how they came up with the system of choosing and how they could rank Mississippi behind so many states as the worst place to live when you're growing old. How could Mississippi come in behind North Dakota with all its bone chilling cold winters or Arizona with its 130 degree summer days? I can pick out several more states that I think would come in behind Mississippi, but I'll just stop there and say that I don't think that we rate number 5-0.

But as you think about growing old and what state you would like to be in, let me suggest to you the best state of all whether you're young or old to live in. Just so you will fully understand, let me give you a verse of Scripture that talks about this state that you can



## "The Best and Worst States to Live in When You Get Old"

live in. Paul said, "Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content" (Phil. 4:11). Of course he was not referring to one of the 50 United States, but he was talking about a state of being and when you live in that state of being that he was talking about, you can be young or you can be old and it will be a wonderful place to live.

**This is an Agreeable state.** It is amazing how being agreeable in life can change the atmosphere where you live, but on the other hand at times, we may all want to lean toward being disagreeable. Some people more than others are disagreeable. In fact, some people are disagreeable so much that they think that God has given them a spiritual gift of being disagreeable. Not only will being disagreeable make your life miserable, it will, to extents far beyond your imagination even to comprehend, make everybody else's life miserable. Living in the agreeable zone of life can lead to great delight. I so often think about the lady who living alone was about to that stage and age in life where she needed some assistance and her daughter wanted to take her to show her some assisted living arrangements. She went to pick up her mother and before they left her house to go and look at this liv-

ing quarters the mother said, "Oh, I just love it." To which the daughter responded, "Well, Mother, we haven't even gone to see it yet." "Well, I know, but I just love it. I just know I do." And she said, "Well, you haven't seen it. How could you love it?" And the mother responded and said, "Well, happiness is a choice and I choose to love it so that I will be happy." For many that may be a stretch, but in all reality, approaching life with that spirit and being agreeable to what is happening in life even as you grow older is a blessed thing. It's an incredible experience and being agreeable is a state in which you can bring joy to a lot of people.

**It is also a Blessing state.** How is that so? Well, if and when and where and how you get to the state of life where you spend more time trying to bless others than to get blessings in your own life, you will have arrived. You will both be receiving blessings and giving blessings and that is a glorious experience in life. If you want to live in this state of blessing whether young or old or aging, you will be required to each day set out to look for at least one person you can bless that day. It doesn't have to be a big thing. It doesn't have to be someone you know, but to bless somebody else's

life, to go out of your way, to do the unusual, the abnormal, the above and beyond, the God guided thing to bless someone else. Now you may be able to do that before daybreak even comes.

**A final state is the Contentment state.** You can travel across the United States and not find a state where you can be right where you are and find it in your own heart. It was actually that that Paul was talking about when he said, "for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content" (Phil. 4:11). It is a wonderful and amazing place to be content with who you are, what you have, what you've done and what you plan to do. Sadly, so few people are able to find this state.

A great old preacher of years gone by tells of his seminary days decades ago. When he had the opportunity to go and be pastor of a little country church out in a rural area he would travel there from his seminary post each weekend and stay with an old farm couple that welcomed him into their home. They were wonderful people but with very limited earthly resources and when he went to stay with him, they told him, "This is your room. You just come and make yourself at home." And this is what they then instructed him, "One, if there's something you need, just get up and get it. Whatever we have is yours. But secondly, if you need something and you can't find it, well, just call us and we will help you find it." But the most important thing they told him was third, "If you need something and you can't find it and we don't have it, we will help you learn to live without it."

In a world of instant and total gratification of everything we want or need, it is a lesson that has been forgotten that you can be content with less or even with nothing and God can bless you and use you. What state are you living in? Oh, I'm not talking about Mississippi or South Carolina; I'm talking about a state of being that God wants to come and enter into in our lives and bless us all through the journey of life even into the aging process. Trust Him.

The author can be contacted at [directions@mbcb.org](mailto:directions@mbcb.org).

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### Revivals & Homecomings

- **Magnolia Church, Laurel:** 6:30 p.m.; Phil Glisson, speaker; Homecoming, Mar. 1; service, 10:30 a.m., followed by lunch; Wayne DuBose, speaker; Ken Culpepper, music.
- **Glendale Church, Leland:** Revival, Mar. 1 - 4; Sun., 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon. - Wed.,
- 6:30 p.m.; Phil Glisson, speaker; Dwayne Conlee and Kenny Williams, music; Scotty the puppet will also be making appearances.
- **Unity Church, Georgetown:** 18th anniversary, Mar. 1; worship, 11 a.m., followed by lunch.

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## Stand for Biblical Marriage

Strong opinions exist on how marriage ought to be defined and who has a right to marry. Should marriage be redefined because some argue marriage is a secular, social construct, or should the traditional, biblical view remain unchanged? Current Mississippi law reflects the biblical view of marriage, but the legal argument to redefine marriage is based on secular reasoning that locate certain personal rights in the U.S. Constitution.

Should Christians be unwavering in their stand for marriage as God designed it, or should they be mute on the issue and step aside to allow an unchallenged culture shift to take place? We should stand. Why?

God-designed marriage is a dynamic, motion picture of the relationship between one

man and one woman before the world. This picture demonstrates not only God's nature but also His desire for a personal relationship with all people.

Chas Rowland, NOBTS adjunct professor of Theology and Church History and pastor of Bovina Baptist Church, describes biblical marriage as being "designed by God to display the glory of God's character, nature, and gospel in specific ways. God's character is seen in the fact that marriage is an unbreakable covenant displaying God's unconditional love for his bride, the Church. God's nature is seen in how a man and a woman become one flesh and in so doing embrace their differences and roles in a similar way that the persons of the triune God are different and distinct in person and role yet one in essence.



with Rob Chambers

God's gospel is seen in how biblical marriage demonstrates how the bride loses her name and receives the name of her groom. When we come to Christ we surrender our old self and we are no longer identified as who we were, but we now bear the name of our groom, Christ Jesus. The fact that we bear His name and have been united to him means that we gain the full privileges of being called children of God."

A majority of voters in Mississippi agree with traditional marriage and is why the Mississippi Constitutional Marriage Amendment defining marriage between one man and one woman passed in 2004 by 86%. But in November 2014 U.S. District Judge Carlton Reeves overturned Mississippi's marriage amendment stating that, "The Fourteenth Amendment operates to remove the blinders of inequality from our eyes. Though we cherish our traditional values, they must give way to constitutional wisdom. Mississippi's traditional beliefs about gay and lesbian citizens led it to defy that wisdom by taking away fundamental rights owed to every citizen. It is time to restore those rights."

"The unobstructed power of the federal courts should not be taken lightly. It is one of the most serious threats to democracy in our country."

Andy Gipson

MS representative and pastor of  
Gum Springs Baptist Church

In response Andy Gipson, a MS representative and pastor of Gum Springs Baptist Church, stated that the "latest series of same-sex marriage court decisions highlights the reality that unelected federal courts, not the people, have become the leading policymakers in our Nation. The unobstructed power of the federal courts should not be taken lightly. It is one of the most serious threats to democracy in our country. I continue to believe the courts have overstepped their bounds, which is why we need the Supreme Court to respect and uphold the rights of the people and the states to have made these critical social decisions. And since the president makes these court appointments, it is why the 2016 presidential elections are so very important for conservative principles."

Also in response to recent U.S. Supreme Court decisions signaling they will declare state traditional marriage laws unconstitutional, theologian R.C. Sproul stated that "the Federal Government is the creation of the states. The states are not secondary administrative outposts of a centralized government that gave birth to them.

"Rather, the Federal Government was created by the Constitutional Convention of the states and the legislative leaders of the states and those leaders charged the Federal Government with a particular set of responsibilities. The Federal Government was created to fill this role and that role, and the same Constitutional [Convention], through the Bill of Rights affirmed in the 10th amendment that anything not listed as a legitimate function of the created Federal Government was to be retained under the jurisdiction of the states or the people... and the states are therefore master over it, not the other way around."

This growing assault on biblical marriage and family prompted the 2014 Mississippi Baptist Convention to pass a resolution that the "union of one man and one woman is the only form of marriage prescribed in the Bible as God's perfect design for the family and as the illustration to humanity of the relationship between Christ and the Church (Genesis 2:24; Hebrews 13:4; Ephesians 5:22-32)."

Rick Lance, executive director of Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions stated what could be echoed in Mississippi. He said they "do not believe any other form of marriage is biblically sanctioned.... Therefore, any church that allows staff members to officiate at same-sex ceremonies is clearly outside biblical teachings about marriage and human sexuality, and they demonstrate that they are not in like-minded fellowship or friendly cooperation with Alabama Baptists and Southern Baptists."

Regardless of what the world decides, the Gospel remains unchanged and we are to proclaim it with joy and confidence.

The author of this analysis, Rob Chambers, serves as consultant for the Mississippi Baptist Christian Action Commission. He can be contacted at 601-292-3331 or rchambers@christianaction.com.

### Need a light?

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life." (John 8:12)

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Christ today, contact a local Southern Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

### MS POSITIONS

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BETHEL BAPTIST CHURCH, A SMALL COUNTRY CHURCH BETWEEN DREW AND RULEVILLE, MISS. IS ACCEPTING RESUMES FOR THE POSITION OF BI-VOCATIONAL PASTOR til 1 April 2015. Please send resumes to P.O. Box 249, Drew, Miss. 38737

## Just for the Record



**LEFLORE CHURCH, HOLCOMB**, held a deacon ordination Feb. 8 for Archie Jeffrey Daves. He is shown with his wife Victoria Smith Daves, oldest son "AJ", Sara Beth Daves, and Landon Daves.



**HOLMESVILLE CHURCH, PIKE ASSOCIATION**, is beginning construction on a new fellowship hall. Shown are Jimmy Tucker, Wade Guy, Richard Bennett, David Creel, Walter Martin, and pastor Lee Mathis.



**STEELE CHURCH, SCOTT ASSOCIATION**, recently recognized the deacons for their service. Shown are Barry Sharp, Tom Cooper, pastor Joey Smith, Keith Warren, and David Sharp.



Linda Perkins, left, WMU director, **CARROLLTON CHURCH, CARROLLTON**, recognized the youngest Mission Friends member, Jenilee Houston, center, and eldest Women on Mission member, Estelle Cooper, right, during morning worship Feb. 15.



**CALVARY CHURCH, SILVER CREEK AND ARM CHURCH, ARM**, came together to present The First Noel Christmas cantata in December.



The **PRENTISS COUNTY ASSOCIATION** held their annual rally Jan. 25 at Mt. Olive Church, Baldwin. The churches gathered with a combined choir of 60. Kenneth Leslie led worship, and Tommy Vinson brought the message.

### In other Church News:

➤ **Bunker Hill Church, Columbia**, will host Squire Parsons in concert Mar. 1, 6 p.m.

➤ **Evergreen Church, Shubuta**, will host the Dixie Echoes in concert Mar. 1, 5 p.m. Love offering.

➤ **Longino Church, Philadelphia**, is hosting Harvest Night with Northcrest Mar. 2, 7 p.m. Northcrest Church Choir, Meridian, music; Dan Lanier, speaker.



The children of **RAYMOND ROAD CHURCH, JACKSON**, participated in CMD 2015. They baked cookies and took them to local businesses. They also put together treat bags for a shelter and prepared homeless kits.



**CALVARY CHURCH, GREENWOOD**, had their Christmas program Dec. 14. The manger scene characters were Pat Ellett, Brad Sherrer, Abby Clark, Jamie Lynn Turner, Dylan Turner, Mac McLellan, and Parker Mays.



**GRACE CHURCH, PHILADELPHIA**, recently had a commissioning service for their Sunday School teachers. Sunday School directors are Torry and Vickie Sharp; Chester Carlisle, pastor.



# Analysis: Top Oscar movies aim at baser instincts

By Phil Boatwright  
Correspondent

I've enjoyably tuned in to the Oscar telecasts since the age of 12. I confess that I preferred the days when the Oscar telecasts were hosted by men who weren't married to other men or walking on stage wearing only socks, shoes, and underwear; when musical divas weren't plastered with tattoos; and when at least one winner looked up and thanked their Creator.



BOATWRIGHT

True, art should be recognized and I don't think the technical and artistic qualities of this year's nominees can be debated, but whatever positive messages may be found in this year's Oscar choices, most of them are eclipsed by extreme content. More than half of the eight Best Picture nominees were rated R. The rest probably deserved to be.

At some point, content has become as influential on the culture as a movie's artistic merits. Movies are modern man's medium for relating parables to the masses, but let's face it — movies are most often not made to nurture the society we live in. Rather, they aim at our baser instincts.

Sadly, films that uplift the spirit are few and far between. Indeed, many of this year's film nominees seem to not just reflect our nation's decaying moral standards, but foster them as well.

The motion picture is an art form. It follows then that the art of storytelling is most effective not just when it shows who we are, but when it suggests what

we can become. Whatever Hollywood wants us to become, the industry as a whole seems determined that we achieve this goal without centering God and Christ in all that we do.

Now, if that sounds a bit pious or judgmental, let me ask, "Which films nominated for Best Picture refrained from the profane use of our Creator's name?" None that I saw. On the whole, the greatest Creator is not revered by Hollywood.

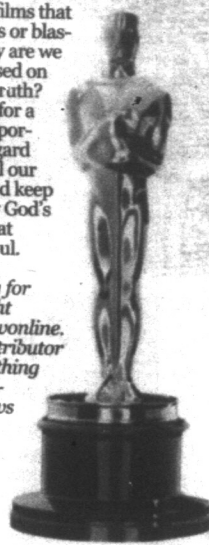
The Oscar jackpot winners are among all of us who should be grateful to God. Instead, they made sure to show gratitude to their agents and their children. One guy even thanked his dog. The Creator went unrewarded.

I honestly don't mean this as hostility to the folks who make up the movie industry. There are many very good show business folk working to make the best product they can, and there are those in that industry who truly wish to better our world. Rather, this piece is meant to reflect on the values of those of us who represent Jesus.

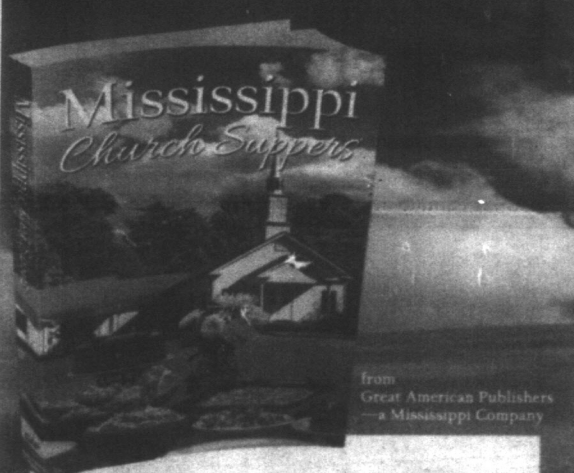
Why is it we support films that ridicule biblical teachings or blaspheme our Creator? Why are we led by a medium so focused on everything but spiritual truth?

Every time we search for a movie, we're given an opportunity to resonate our regard for the Creator and signal our faith following. We should keep Christ in our focus, study God's Word daily, and avoid that which doesn't feed the soul.

In addition to writing for Baptist Press, Boatwright reviews films for [previewonline.org](http://previewonline.org) and is a regular contributor to *The World and Everything In It*, a weekly radio program from WORLD News Group. He is a Southern Baptist layman from Thousand Oaks, Ca. His commentary, edited for style, appears courtesy of Baptist Press.



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## 'Fifty Shades' fading, but total receipts remain astronomical

NASHVILLE (BP and local reports) — *Fifty Shades of Grey* plummeted 73% at the box office in its second weekend, as critics predicted, but still held the top spot in weekend movie sales at \$23.2 million.

The drop is the second-biggest decline ever for a movie playing at over 3,100 cinemas, the Box Office Mojo movie monitoring service reported.

The movie topped \$85 million in its opening four-day weekend beginning Feb. 12, and has earned nearly \$130 million domestically to date, Box Office Mojo reported Feb. 24. Combined with heavy international box office appeal, the movie has grossed nearly \$410,000,000 to date on a production budget estimated at \$40,000,000.

The movie's strong opening was partly attributed to its Valentine's weekend premiere, and was not predicted to hold. Additionally, the movie received poor reviews, including 25% on the Rotten Tomatoes "tomatometer" and a "C+" from CinemaScore polling.

Many Southern Baptist leaders have described the movie as pornography and encouraged Christians to avoid it.

The book series by British author E.L. James, upon which the movie is based, exploited female readers' fondness for romance novels and then shifted the focus to pornography. R. Albert Mohler, president of Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky., wrote at [AlbertMohler.com](http://AlbertMohler.com).

"While many had noted the attraction of so-called 'romance novels' to many women, the arrival of the *Fifty Shades* series announced that the culture at large



**FIFTY SHADES** — Jamie Dornan (left) and Dakota Johnson star in the controversial motion picture currently in international release, *Fifty Shades of Grey*. (Photo attribution unavailable)

was ready to shift to what can only be described as explicitly pornographic," Mohler said.

Furthermore, the plot line of the series, now quite well known in the larger society, is devoted to forms of sexuality that had historically been defined as perverse and abusive.

"Going to see [the movie] or reading the book series is an exercise in pornographic intent and effect. It is also an act of defiance against the goodness of the gift of sex as granted to humanity by God. Furthermore, the series is an assault upon the dignity of every human being."

Joel Owen, lead pastor of Grace Fellowship Church in Kingsport, Tn., in a commentary submitted to Baptist Press described the depravity of the relationship between the lead characters in the movie.

"Christian and secular reviews alike describe the 'relationship' not as exciting, but abusive," Owen wrote. "There are traits like possessiveness, stalking, high pressure to

comply, etc., and none of it is designed to be long term in nature."

Evangelical blogger Samuel James noted even the movie's lead actors themselves — Jamie Dornan and Dakota Johnson — seemed to be ashamed of their roles, judging by an interview during the movie's publicity tour. "To me, both Dornan and Johnson sound like actors who deeply regret signing on to make this film," Samuel James blogged at [patheos.com](http://patheos.com).

"Self-loathing is a prominent feature of pornography. Porn demands justification but never rewards those efforts with peace. That may or may not be what these actors are feeling, but to be honest, I hope it is," Samuel James wrote. "If two attractive, wealthy profiteers of porn were to be transparent about the scarring effects of participating in it, many who are trapped at Eros's altar might get courage to flee."

"The Cross of Jesus is proof that God loves to turn the darkness against itself."

# Lawsuit outcome still unclear after Houston verdict

**HOUSTON, Texas (BP)** — In a Feb. 13 verdict that left both sides claiming victory, a Houston, Texas, jury handed down a decision in a lawsuit against the city and administrators for their dismissal of a petition by a coalition of pastors and civic leaders opposed to the city's Equal Rights Ordinance.

Though the jury, in a 10-2 verdict, found nearly 2,500 forgeries among the 54,000 voter signatures, they dismissed the city's allegations of fraud. With no definitive winner revealed by the verdict, the decision will not be finalized until 152nd District Court Judge Robert Schaffer issues his judgment.

Following the verdict, lead defense attorney Geoffrey Harrison claimed the verdict as a win for the defense and Annise Parker, Houston's lesbian mayor who championed the ordinance as a "personal" issue. Defendants in the lawsuit are Parker, former Houston City Attorney David Feldman, City Secretary Anna Russell, and the City of Houston.

"If the court's ruling follows the jury's verdict this will be a complete and total vindication for the city," Har-

rison told reporters following the verdict, "and the petition, which we declared failed back in August, will indeed be found, judicially, to have failed as well."

Andy Taylor, lead attorney for the plaintiffs, said once Schaffer and subsequent appellate courts apply the law and legal precedent, any still-disqualified voter signatures could be ruled valid, breathing new life into the referendum.

"We are very excited the jury vindicated us and found no fraud," Taylor said, following Harrison's remarks. "This jury was asked by this mayor to indict these hardworking citizens — these volunteer circulators — on the basis that they committed fraud. The jury found 13 out of 13 times no fraud was committed."

Lead attorneys for both sides indicated the case will be appealed when Schaffer's ruling finalizes the jury's work. The case would then go to the First or Fourteenth District Court of Appeals in Houston.

Taylor said he will ask the court for an expedited process in order to get the referendum on the November ballot should his clients prevail in court.



**PAUSING FOR PRAYER** — As others made their way from a Houston courthouse following the *Woodfill v. Parker* verdict on Feb. 13, pastors lingered to pray. Vietnamese Church pastor Khan Huynh (center), one of the pastors subpoenaed by the city during the lawsuit's investigation, led the prayer. (BP photo courtesy of Southern Baptist TEXAN)

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 QMFAOZ PKV ZA OZPO NAPLAOZ UPC  
 NAXMYIA OMEAOZAN.

XMZK TMHN: OZYNOC-QYD

Clue:  $N = R$

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Mark 4:20

By Charles Marx, 1932-2004, © 2005

## Submission Guidelines

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention. News items and/or photographs depicting benefits and activities for secular or outside organizations will not be published.

Preferred method: news may be submitted electronically to the e-mail address below, and must be included in the message segment of an e-mail form. Secondary method: news may be typewritten or neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper and mailed. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone. Due to ever-present virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments in JPEG format are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs must be submitted electronically via e-mail, as attachments in JPEG format. Hard copy photographs mailed through the postal service will not be accepted. Photographs must be clear, sharp, and well-lighted. Photographs must depict people. No landscape, building, or object-only photographs will be printed. Photographs containing inappropriate gestures and objectionable clothing will not be published. Cell phone photographs and other low resolution items that do not reproduce well on newsprint are generally not publishable.

There is no guarantee that news items and/or photographs will be published, and unsolicited material will not be acknowledged or returned. All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date. Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis. These guidelines are not meant to be exhaustive.

Submit news to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (801) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org.

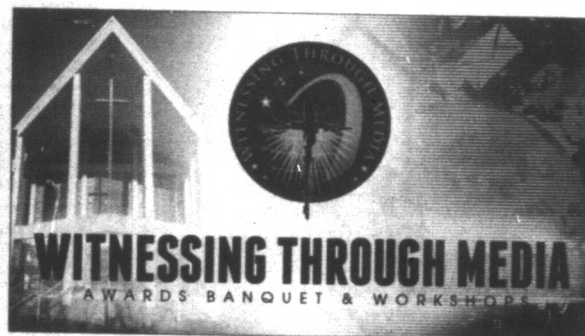
# Witnessing Through Media set March 20-21 in Madison

**JACKSON, Ms. (Special)** — Todd Starnes, award-winning host of FOX News & Commentary on cable television's Fox News Network in New York City and former associate editor of Baptist Press in Nashville, will be the featured speaker for the Witnessing Through Media Workshops and Awards Banquet March 20-21 at Broadmoor Church, Madison.



STARNES

Starnes, heard daily on hundreds of radio stations around the nation, also writes a column for FoxNews.com and is a regular contributor to top-rated Fox News Channel programs such as The O'Reilly Factor. He is the author of three books, the most recent being God Less Ameri-



ca, a collection of essays documenting the war on religious liberty in the United States.

A complete list of workshops and scheduling for Witnessing Through Media can be accessed at [mbcb.org/business-services/communication-services/witnessing-through-media/](http://mbcb.org/business-services/communication-services/witnessing-through-media/). Registration can be accessed at [mbcb.org/event/witnessing-through-media/](http://mbcb.org/event/witnessing-through-media/).

The deadline to register is March 6. For more informa-

tion, contact the Communications Services Department at the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board at (601) 292-3378 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 378. E-mail: [jchen@mbcb.org](mailto:jchen@mbcb.org).

The Witnessing Through Media Workshops and Awards Banquet is sponsored by Mississippi Baptists in Broadcasting, and is a ministry of the Mississippi Cooperative Program.

## DISMISSAL

cont. from p. 1

condemned in the Bible," according to a printed version of the sermon on the church's website. Freeman wrote in the Feb. 10 edition of Weatherly Heights' newsletter that the congregation's leaders had given him "the freedom to officiate a same sex marriage."

The Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions and the Southern Baptist Convention have not yet taken action related to Weatherly Heights.

Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, told BP in a written statement, "Our position is that any church that allows staff members to perform marriage ceremonies for same sex couples has demonstrated that they are no longer in like-minded fellowship and friendly cooperation with Alabama Baptists and Southern Baptists."

SBC Executive Committee Executive Vice President D. August Boto told BP regarding the Huntsville congregation, "Although such cases are rare, when they have happened, it has usually been the case that the various bodies in Southern Baptist life — including the association, state convention, and SBC — have viewed the facts similarly and have taken similar courses of action. This is because most Southern Baptists generally do not differ on the authority of Scripture."

## NAMB

cont. from p. 1

Co. "How are you going to minister to these military bases overseas, to these military personnel if you can't preach? So these chaplains, on their own, not paid by the government but on their own, would plant a church close to that base so that they could have a Bible-believing, Bible-preaching church that our soldiers and their families could go to."

"This is just to be proactive," said Ben Kelley, chairman of the EC's Cooperative Program Committee, in case military chaplains are "restricted in what they can do" in sharing the Gospel.

Implementation, if it is ever needed, can proceed in cooperation with IMB and in matching stateside churches with potential church plants near military installations, said Kelley, a healthcare executive from Montgomery, Al. Questions raised during the EC meeting included why IMB couldn't undertake church plants near military bases if need be. Al Gilbert, NAMB vice president for evangelism, noted that the Executive Committee "approved the exact same language for the International Mission Board" in 2011 to enable IMB to assist NAMB with unreached people groups in the U.S.

"Since that time, we have been working in agreement with them, defining special

needs and agreeing upon ways they can assist..." Gilbert said. The proposed ministry assignment amendment for NAMB, he said, is "an attempt to get consistent language for both of our boards to be able to cooperate globally for the Great Commission."

The proposed amendment was approved by NAMB trustees in February 2014. The SBC Organization Manual requires that changes to ministry statements of the SBC's entities be approved by the EC as well as a majority vote of messengers at an SBC annual meeting.

IMB President David Platt, in a Jan. 15 letter to EC President Frank Page, reported, "The leadership of IMB gladly affirms and supports this recommendation, as a step toward further cooperation between the two entities, for the sake of the spread of the Gospel throughout the world."

The proposed NAMB ministry amendment comes amid ongoing wariness among evangelicals of the military's attitude toward religious expression within its ranks. After the U.S. Supreme Court struck down the Defense of Marriage Act in 2013, NAMB adopted a policy stipulating that Southern Baptist-endorsed chaplains must not perform same sex marriages nor provide counseling to same sex couples. Rather, such individuals will be helped in finding other military chaplains willing to assist same sex couples.

# THE VILLAGE VIEW



**Dr. Rory Lee, Executive Director**

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## GIFTS OF HONOR AND MEMORY

A portion of The Village View is allocated each month to a list of Gifts of Honor and Memory. Many groups and individuals elect to pay tribute to others through this sensitive, meaningful, and helpful medium. This feature is hopefully designed to further honor, with taste and respect, those who are and have been special to our special friends.

DECEMBER 1-15, 2014

### MEMORIALS

Sara Currie  
Ms. Judy H. Lacy  
Mrs. Mary Jo Dacus  
Mr. & Mrs. F. R. Clark  
Ray Dowdle  
Mr. & Mrs. Jimmy Jenkins  
Mr. Bob Ellington  
Mr. & Mrs. Jimmy Jenkins  
Bobby Ray Fairley  
Mrs. Christine F. McRee  
Robert Joel Fairley  
Mrs. Christine F. McRee  
Kenneth Forbes  
Mr. & Mrs. James H. Ashmore  
Alan Ray Ford  
Mr. & Mrs. Jerry Ford  
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Margaret Freeman  
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## God Is • Nahum 1:1-8

While serving as pastor in the small west Texas town of Goree, my family got very familiar with storm shelters. It began in the wee hours of the morning when we heard the storm siren. We gathered our two small children and "weathered the storm" to go to our next door neighbor's storm shelter to wait out the tornado. This would be the first of many occasions of such an event during our ministry there as we lived in the "tornado alley" of west Texas.

God tells us we will face many such storms on our life pilgrimage. Some will come just because we live in an uncertain world. Others will come as the result of bad decisions on our part. One thing for sure, God is aware of every circumstance.

Nahum tells us that we can learn from the storms. We can see God at work in everything we face. Henry Blackaby would say, "God is at work all around us. We just need to find where He is working and join Him."

As we look through Nahum, particularly the first chapter, we discover several character traits of God to reveal His working in and through our personal circumstances.

### God is...Jealous (Nahum 1:1-3a)

"God is jealous, and the Lord avenges...the Lord will take vengeance on His adversaries..." (NKJV Nahum 1:2)

We see Nahum declaring God's just actions against those who do not take God seriously. God wants every person to follow His will. In fact God tells us He will bless those who follow Him. But He also tells us that He will take action against those who disregard Him. God blessed Nineveh when they repented of sins after the preaching of Jonah. But in this occasion some 100 years after Jonah, God is saying "He reserves wrath for His enemies" (v. 2) God does not always act immediately

to deal with the enemy, but history has proved the fact of God's actions against those who totally disregard His truth.

### God is...Sovereign (Nahum 1:3b-6)

"The Lord has His way...Who can stand before His indignation?" (NKJV Nahum 3b:6)

The fierceness of tornadoes and hurricanes leave a wide path of destruction as they cross our land. Mis-

issippi has seen its share of both. The devastation is hard to describe. Many ask questions of why. While we do not say that storms are the result of man's sinfulness, we do say that God is working over all, through all, and in all things to reveal His plans.

Nahum describes all the forces of nature as tools of God to enforce His justice and reveal His plans. All must stand accountable to God's Word.

### God is...Good (Nahum 1:7)

"The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble." (NKJV Nahum 1:7)

In the midst of life's

storms, God reveals His character of comfort and strength to those who trust solely in Him. Paul told the Corinthian church that God "comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves have been comforted." (NKJV 2 Corinthians 1:4)

God is our stronghold. He alone can

meet our needs in the face of difficulty beyond our understanding. Yet, He is faithful and promises never to leave us or forsake us. (Matthew 28:20)

### God is...Just (Nahum 1:8)

"But with an overflowing flood He will make an utter end of its place" (NKJV Nahum 1:8)

Assyria was a city of godless violence, injustice and destruction. God did not allow such disregard to go unnoticed. He allowed the once repentant Nineveh to be destroyed. He allowed godless nations to overrun the city and nation.

Our world should take notice of the history of God's people. For, when God's people disregard the plan and will of God for His people, God's justice will always prevail. It may not be immediate, but "darkness will pursue His enemies." (NKJV Nahum 1:8)

God desires us to walk in daily fellowship with Him. He wants us to abide in Him and He wants His Word to abide in us. As we continue in that plan, He will reveal to us His purposes, His plans, and His will for our lives. Look around and discover how God is working and join with Him.

Young is retired Sunday School Director, Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, and a member of Ridgecrest Church, Madison.



## Explore the Bible

with Kiely D. Young

## Promised Like No Other • Isaiah 53:1-12

What a blessing to study and teach and sing and write about my favorite subject: Jesus! Our scripture passages over the next eight weeks will testify that He is like no other. Jesus was completely human, completely divine, completely unique. The Old Testament presents forth-telling prophecy of His life, death, burial and resurrection. The New Testament presents fulfillment proof of His ministry, sacrifice, ascension, exaltation and certain return. The Word of God reveals that Jesus is our purpose, our salvation, our life. Incomprehensibly incomparable, Jesus stands alone.

The salvation story began before creation. In the heart of God, the certain coming sinful choices of man would require the shed blood of an innocent Savior. God created the First Adam anyway, knowing that the Second Adam was waiting in the wings. Jesus would fully accomplish the will of His Father from His humble, meager manger beginnings all the way through Calvary and the empty tomb to eternity. Upon completion of every phase of His earthly assignment Jesus could say unequivocally, "It is finished!" The Promise Maker was the Promise Keeper.

More than seven (7) hundred (100) years before (not after) Bethlehem (did you get that?), God sent a prophet to the Southern Kingdom of Judah

named Isaiah. His prophetic ministry spanned the reigns of four Judean kings. Even the meaning of the Hebrew name "Isaiah" reveals the heart and plan of the Father: "the Lord saves and helps." Chapter 53 of Isaiah records for us the prophecy of The Suffering Servant. God knew that man had a sin problem and needed salvation help. However, the picture of this salvation help was drawn upon a canvas of lifelong pain and suffering for One yet to come.

Verse one dares us to even attempt

to comprehend what we are about to discover about the Suffering Servant. This One would come from humble beginnings, being perceived as an ordinary guy, nothing special. He would be rejected, despised and forsaken by his own family and His beloved Jewish nation. He would be well acquainted with grief, declared to be a man of sorrows.

He would be subjected to the deepest wounding of all as He would bear His own massive, personal, physical anguish while bearing all of the pun-

ishment that was due to all of mankind. He would be stricken (slapped), smitten (beaten) and afflicted (mistreated). He would be pierced through with thorns and lashes and nails and a sword. He would be crushed because of OUR transgressions and iniquities.

This Servant would be perfectly innocent, sinless, spotless, guiltless. The chastening (discipline) that WE deserved would fall on His shoulders. He would be scourged to accomplish OUR healing. To "scourge" means to wound, to stripe, to inflict blows, to

bruise. Ask the Roman soldier who followed the orders of Pilate to give you an up-close and personal description.

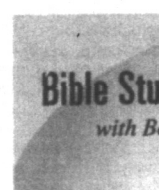
Please do not miss the fact that the gospel accounts mirror these exact prophecies as being fulfilled in the body of Jesus before the cross. This One who never deserved death would willingly give His life for those of us who courted death with every single breath-taking sinful conscious choice. This Suffering Servant would be the Lamb of God. The Shepherd would

die for the sheep. All of His suffering, oppression and judgment would be cross-connected. His complimentary funeral arrangements would be made courtesy of a rich man. The gospels reveal this man by name to be Joseph of Arimathea. All of this was planned by God the Father.

Verse eleven declares that this Righteous Servant belongs to God! He is identified as "My Servant" by the True Author of this book which was chronicled by Isaiah, the prophet. Jesus was numbered with (counted to be a part of) the transgressors so that transgressors would have a way out. All four gospels record that Jesus was crucified between two thieves. One nail-scarred arm of Jesus reached out to a thief who said, "Remember Me." We will meet him in Heaven! The other arm of Jesus was stretched toward a thief whose name shall forever be "Could have been forgiven."

Prophesied with God-perfect precision, The Suffering Servant came just as God said He would. Jesus. Promised like no other. Ponder this: every person who came in contact with Jesus during the crucifixion was stained with His blood. God was making a way to raise up generations of "faithers." I am one. Are you?

Brown is staff evangelist, First Church, Richland.



## Bible Studies for Life

with Becky Brown



# Surveys: Americans uneasy over Islamic way of life

## SHARIA LAW

**Worried that Sharia Law—an Islamic legal and moral code—could be applied in America.**

Among Americans:

Overall:  37% Agree

Women:  42% Agree

Men:  33% Agree

Age 45 and older:  47% Agree

Age 18-44:  27% Agree

LifeWay

## PEACE

**True Islam creates a peaceful society.**

Among Americans:

Overall:  43% Agree

Women:  42% Agree

Men:  44% Agree

Age 35 and older:  40% Agree

Age 18-34:  52% Agree

Among Pastors:

Overall:  30% Agree

Mainline Pastors:  42% Agree

Evangelical Pastors:  23% Agree

LifeWay

## ISIS

**ISIS is a true indication of what Islam looks like when Islam controls a society.**

Among Americans:

Overall:  27% Agree

Women:  25% Agree

Men:  29% Agree

Age 45 and older:  34% Agree

Age 18-44:  19% Agree

Among Pastors:

Overall:  45% Agree

Mainline Pastors:  36% Agree

Evangelical Pastors:  51% Agree

LifeWay

**NASHVILLE (BP and local reports)** — As U.S. President Barack Obama seeks to ramp up military action against the terrorist group known as ISIS, Americans remain uneasy over the place of Islam in the United States and in the world, three LifeWay Research surveys show.

Thirty-seven percent of respondents to the surveys say they are worried about Sharia law, a harsh Islamic legal and moral code, being applied in America.

Twenty-seven percent believe the terrorist group ISIS reflects the true nature of Islam, while 43% believe Islam can create a peaceful society.

Most Protestant senior pastors (76%) say they support military action against ISIS.

Those are among the results of two surveys of 1,000 Americans each, along with a survey of 1,000 senior pastors of Protestant churches, from LifeWay Research, an arm of LifeWay Christian Resources in Nashville.

## Are terrorists Islamic?

"ISIS has stirred an odd religious debate in America today," said Ed Stetzer, executive director of LifeWay Research. "In a nation that has long espoused religious freedom, Americans are thinking long and hard about the kind of society Islam fosters — especially the more radical groups that say they are Islamic — and whether Sharia law would ever be adopted here."

Terrorist attacks last month on the offices of a satirical magazine and a Jewish delicatessen, both in Paris, and the rise of ISIS have renewed concerns over extremist versions of Islam.

In particular, ISIS is known for its brutality. Its fighters executed a number of prisoners over the past year, including the burning alive of a Jordanian fighter pilot and the beheading of 21 Coptic Christians.

The death of a female American aid worker, also captured by ISIS, was confirmed this week, according to media reports.

Since last year, the U.S. military has helped conduct air strikes against ISIS. Obama and other U.S. leaders have argued the group — also known as ISIL — is a terrorist organization, not a religious group.

"Now let's make two things clear," the president said in a Sept. 10, 2014, address to the nation. "ISIL is not Islamic. No religion condones the killing of innocents, and the vast majority of ISIL's victims have been Muslim."

Few Americans accept that view. Forty-eight percent disagree with the statement, "ISIS is not Islamic." Twenty-two percent agree, while three in 10 are not sure.

However, survey respondents also did not believe ISIS reflects what a society shaped by Islam looks like. Only twenty-seven percent agree with the statement, "ISIS is a true indication of what Islam looks like when Islam controls a society." Forty-seven percent disagree, and twenty-six percent are not sure.

## Military action

Researchers found widespread support among Protestant pastors for military action against ISIS. Seventy-six percent say, "Air strikes against ISIS are needed to protect Christians in Syria and Iraq." Only 13% disagree.

Support of airstrikes was similar among white (76%), African-American (75%), evangelicals (79%), and Mainline (71%) pastors. Two-thirds of younger pastors, those ages 18-44, support the air strikes, as do nearly all (85%) of pastors over 65.

Stetzer said he believes the overwhelming support from Protestant pastors will bolster President Obama's case for more military action against ISIS. "Pastors and Americans are clearly behind greater military engagement," he said.

## Views on Islam

Pastors, researchers found, are also critical about the nature of Islam. Sixty-one percent of Protestant senior pastors disagree with the statement, "True Islam creates a peaceful society." Thirty percent agree. African-American pastors (50%) are more likely to say Islam can create a peaceful society than white pastors (30%).

Few evangelical pastors agree (23%), but that number jumps to forty-two percent for Mainline pastors.

About half of pastors (45%) say ISIS gives a true indication of what an Islamic society looks like. A similar number (47%) disagree. Evangelical and mainline pastors are split on this question as well. About half of evangelicals (51%) agree, but only a thirty-six percent of mainliners agree.

Overall, LifeWay Research found American views about Islam are split along demographic lines, with older Americans more skeptical of Islam than younger Americans. That's especially true in the case of Sharia law, the Islamic legal and religious code.

Overall, thirty-seven percent of Americans are worried about Sharia law being applied in the United States. That includes forty-seven percent of those over 45. Only about a quarter (27%) of those ages 18-44 worry about Sharia law.

## Religion of peace?

Americans are also divided over how peaceful Islam is at heart. Forty-three percent agree with the statement, "True Islam creates a peaceful society." A similar number (39%) disagree. Eighteen are unsure.

More than half (52%) of younger Americans, those ages 18-34, say Islam can create a peaceful society. By contrast, forty percent of those ages 35 and older say Islam can create a peaceful society.

LifeWay Research also found other demographic differences in how Americans see Islam.

Women (42%) are more likely to worry about Sharia law than men (33%). They are also less likely (19%) than men (26%) to agree that ISIS is not Islamic.

While half of evangelicals (51%) worry about Sharia, few Catholics (34%) or Nones (21%), those with no religious preference, share their concerns.

Evangelicals are particularly skeptical about Islam's role in public life. Only a third (33 percent) agree true Islam creates a peaceful society. Catholics (49%) and Nones (47%) are more likely to see a positive role for Islam.

"Every religion has a broad spectrum of groups that fall under their umbrella," Stetzer said. "Who is mainstream or extreme, who is orthodox or heretical, is often a topic of fierce debate."